

**MINUTES OF THE 22<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL TOWN MEETING  
FOR PORTISHEAD HELD AT THE FOLK HALL  
HIGH STREET, PORTISHEAD  
ON WEDNESDAY  
13<sup>th</sup> MAY 2015**

- PRESENT** Councillor Knight, Vice Chairman of the Town Council –  
Presiding
- Mrs Jo Duffy – Clerk (taking Minutes)
- APOLOGIES** Councillor: Don Cameron, Peter Mitchell & Andrew Huffadine-  
Cooper

There were approximately 76 residents present.

**MINUTES OF 21<sup>st</sup> ANNUAL TOWN MEETING: 7<sup>th</sup> MAY 2014 (Agenda item .3)**

The Minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Town Meeting held on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014 had been circulated and presented to the meeting.

Mrs Annette Hennessy queried the accuracy of the minutes on page 2. She stated that she had corrected Mr. Oyns as he was giving incorrect information and he said “we have heard quite enough from you”. She asked that this was added to the minutes. The proposal to amend the minutes was seconded by Mrs. Ann Townsend.

The minutes were corrected to reflect Mr Oyns’ comment.

It was agreed that the Minutes be approved as a correct record.

**RESOLVED that:-**

The amended Minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Town Meeting for Portishead held on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2014, are confirmed as a correct record.

Councillor Knight drew the meetings attention to the 2014 – 2015 Annual Report from the Portishead Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Sandy Tebbutt spoke on behalf of Portishead in Bloom. She gave a resume of last year’s activities. There have been many working parties, you will see the volunteers around the town with their hi-vis jackets on, doing good work. They have given concerts, held plant sales and appeared at the Victorian Evening and they go to the flower show. Their presence in the town is quite high. They have had a few lovely planting days this year; they have had a morning with the children from the Lakeside Nursery. They planted daffodil bulbs, which they cared for during the winter, they then planted them on the Esplanade Meadow. They are also working with the new nursery at the old police station and they are helping to revamp their grounds making them more user friendly. They have cleared and weeded the Town Garden. Mrs Tebbutt reminded everyone of the lovely meadow last summer. They have received permission to continue this year and perhaps next. They have had three working

parties there where they have cleared, weeded and sown the seeds. The baskets on the carousels have had to come down earlier than they had hoped because of the adverse weather conditions with it being windy and dry. They will be emptying the tubs this Sunday if anyone wants to come out and join them. They will be refilling them on Thursday evening at 6pm; all the details are on their website. They have their annual plant sale this Saturday, please come along to the Town Garden at the Waitrose Piazza from 9am. Also they have their open gardens weekend on the 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> of June, which is their big fund raiser. She thanked the Town Council for funding the baskets and the tubs. The programmes cost £4.50 each and it takes you to see 15 gardens scattered around Portishead. They are grateful to the Town Council for their support and they are grateful to the District Council for their support and their work in kind. They are also grateful to the people that sponsor them and send donations. The work parties work a staggering amount of hours, all voluntary and consequently they are entered into the Nationals. Last year they won the highest accolade, they won their class in the Nationals, beating cities like London, Leeds, Leicester & Norwich and they also received the Pride of Place award and that was awarded because of their great community spirit.

Councillor Knight said she hoped everyone will agree that Portishead in Bloom does absolutely wonderful work and without them this town would not look as good as it does. She thanked Sandy, their committee and all their helpers.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT AND REVIEW OF THE BUSINESS UNDERTAKEN BY THE COUNCIL IN THE 2014/2015 MUNICIPAL YEAR INCLUDING A POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FROM THE TOWN CLERK ABOUT THE WORKINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OFFICE (Agenda item .4)**

Councillor Knight, the Vice Chairman of the Town Council presented Councillor Cameron's Annual Report and review of the business undertaken by the Council in the 2014/2015 year.

Councillor Cameron's report is attached to and forms part of these minutes. (Appendix A)

Councillor Knight handed over to the Clerk. The Clerk provided a PowerPoint presentation on the workings of the Council office.

A copy of the presentation is attached to and forms part of these minutes (Appendix B)

*Clerk's Note. These minutes record what was said during public speaking. They have been written verbatim to avoid any misrepresentation of the speaker named.*

#### **ELECTORS FORUM - PUBLIC SPEAKING (Agenda item .5)**

- Mr. Paul Maltby made a point of procedure. Four years ago the people of this meeting requested that somebody chairs the meeting who is not a Councillor. They were told at the time by the Clerk, if the Chairman of the Council was here, he or she must chair the meeting and in the Chairman's absence the Vice Chairman must chair the meeting. He moved that the Chairman is not

here and he also moved that Councillor Knight is not the Vice Chairman as she did not seek re-election. Under these circumstances that neither the Chairman nor Vice Chairman is present that under the Local Government Act 1972 states that it is for the people of this meeting to elect a chairman. He moved that we ask if there are any volunteers to chair this meeting and if so we take a vote on it.

- Councillor Knight asked if this was the will of the meeting and was there anybody that wanted to Chair the meeting?
- Mrs. Annette Hennessy proposed that Mr. Maltby chaired the meeting.
- Mr Maltby said that he did not want to chair the meeting. He went on to say that if no-one else wanted to chair the meeting and the people of the meeting wished him to chair the meeting, then he would chair it.
- The Clerk referred to Arnold-Baker on Local Council Administration which states in reference to Town Meetings “if there is a parish council its chairman may attend (whether he is an elector or not) and if he is present he must preside. The vice chairman must preside in the chairman’s absence. If both are absent, the meeting elects someone to preside.”
- Councillor Knight asked the meeting what they would like her to do and the meeting responded that they would like her to carry on.
- Mrs. Judy Brighton as a Portishead resident it was nice to read the multiple letters of thanks from our newly elected and re-elected Councillors in the North Somerset Times. It was very reassuring to see that her particular ward’s representatives, one of whom she can see here this evening, state that they will do their very best to represent the interests of Portishead and North Somerset over the next four years and will make themselves readily available to assist us with any issues. She looks forward to hearing how our representatives intend to achieve this with high levels of public concern associated with the redevelopment of the golf course. Many of us, because of inadequate local publication, a single sheet attached to a single lamp post on the opposite side of the road are unaware until very recently of plans that have been passed by the Town Council. Plans which involve the importation of 16,000 cubic metres of land fill, that is 3,200 lorry movements through the already problematical Cabstand junction and the destruction of prime wildlife habitat, which incidentally has already begun during the bird nesting season. The golf course is the jewel in the crown of Portishead, not as a course but as a beautiful open space cherished by residents for a multitude of activities. She has walked, sledged and even skied, watched the Red Arrows, flown kites and even picnicked on this land all the 25 years that she has resided in Portishead. She cannot bear the thought of landfill being dumped on this cherished asset and her access being denied. Councillors we seek your help.
- Mrs. Janet Davey said that she has come here this evening to raise the issue of the golf course. The situation at the moment is that the project has been given planning permission subject to various issues being resolved. Landlord’s

consent has not yet been given; this is subject to a successful geological survey. NSC does not wish to pay for the survey, without which the residents of Portishead and users of the coastal path cannot be sure of the safety of the project. NSC intends to fence off the whole course and deny access to walkers many of whom have been using the area for up to 69 years. The public may wish to know that on the 24<sup>th</sup> February in an email to an officer at the council, Mr. Stiff the developer clearly states that he does not have a business plan for the future of the developed course. This is he has no plans in place to market this course after he has done the work. Many people have been interviewed about the proposed work on the golf course over the last few weeks and at the start of this 98% of these had no idea that anything was going to happen at all, which calls into question the Council's claim that we have been kept informed throughout. She and Ann Townsend visited Councillor Ashton at his surgery in Tickenham prior to the election and discussed having a period of consultation. Mr Ashton agreed that this should happen. Now that the election is over they hope that this will soon be implemented. However it would be very helpful if members of the public could contact their Councillors and of course Mr. Ashton and ask for this to be a priority. The Council has also agreed to take the Town & Village Green Status of the course forward for them, which will enable them to access the land forever. She thanked the Councillors for their thoughtful co-operation on this matter. To help with this they have a number of petitions; an online petition ([i-petitions@portisheadgolfcourse](mailto:i-petitions@portisheadgolfcourse) with 1,033 signatures and many comments supporting the Town Green application. These will be made available to read after the meeting. There are 110 signed letters from people saying that they use the golf course for leisure reasons, walking, sledging for 20 years or more. There are 200 signatures on other petitions supporting Town Green status. They are in the process of collecting user evidence forms, as well. She has some of those available for collection as well. Just for the record the on-line petition supporting the work on the golf course to take place has 12 signatures, two of these signed the petition in error intending to sign theirs and one of the other signatures is that of the person wishing to carry out the work and does not live in Portishead. Mrs Davey asked if any of the three District Councillors is willing to take the petition and present it at District Council level and help us to fight our cause. She addressed Cllrs David Pasley, David Oyns and Peter Burden. Cllr. Burden willingly offered to take the petition. A copy of the electronic petition and hand written petition was handed over to Cllr. Burden.

- Mrs. Ann Townsend said that she was not going to talk about the Golf Course, but something equally important. At the last Town Council meeting, the Chairman commented on the public participation in a very positive way, stating how much improved it had been than other meetings.

It would be reasonable to state that public participation witnessed during previous meetings has not always been as productive and positive as one would have hoped. I am sure at times it was as uncomfortable for members of the public as it was for Councillors.

There is a clear interdependency between the Town Council and members of the public, one cannot exist without the other to be truly effective. It is acknowledged that the members of the council provide a service to the

community which is not always recognised and is sometimes maligned. It must also be frustrating when members of the public appear ill-informed or combative.

Likewise, members of the public often feel that they have no voice, are not listened to and are an inconvenience to the running of an otherwise smooth meeting.

As always, poor communication is most likely to be the root cause of many of the problems encountered in relationships between the public and the council.

With the election behind us, members of the public and Councillors have a golden opportunity to make improvements to relationships and to work together in a common objective to improve Portishead.

To facilitate this improvement, I ask that a working group consisting of Councillors and members of the public work together to explore how public participation could be improved to make it a value adding activity with mutual respect in a safe and open environment.

This is truly an opportunity for all. We have the option to leave public participation as it is or to make real improvements for the benefit of all.

I now ask all Council members to consider this proposal and for the Council to provide a formal answer at the next Town Council meeting. Mrs. Townsend went on to say that her second point is that she believes there is Parish Poll. She has discussed it with the Clerk just before the meeting and this public meeting needs to agree on a question to ask the electorate of Portishead. She suggested that the question that we ask is, "Can Portishead Golf Course go forward for Town and Village Green status?"

- Dr Michael Brighton, he started by saying just like many people in here he has a strong interest in wildlife. He said that he is concerned because there have been some changes to Portbury Wharf funding arrangements. He gave a brief background to the comment. You may be aware that Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve was created as part of the planning consent for the Village Quarter. This was particularly to mitigate competing demands for housing development and natural habitat. Funding to maintain the Nature Reserve was provided by each household at the Village Quarter in an annual levy of around £55. Each year, each household pays £55 and that is used to support the Nature Reserve. The Nature Reserve since it has been developed has been maintained by experts from Avon Wildlife. Then fairly recently Cllr. Ashton wrote to each household on the Village Quarter making it clear that the annual levy would be abolished and the Council would take up the maintenance of the Nature Reserve, so all the people across the Village Quarter no-longer have to pay the levy. Consequently this has made him write a letter to Councillor Ashton with copies to all of the Town and District Councillors to better his understanding of why this decision has been made. He read out the questions that he had raised in his letter. Why was Avon Wildlife Trust left out of the funding negotiation process with Persimmon and Council officers when it has been a key element of the success achieved so far? One would have expected, at the very least, the inclusion of Avon Wild Life as a courtesy, but more realistically, Avon Wildlife Trust's expert views should surely have been deemed, by the Council and Persimmon, as essential to any decision making process. Councillor Ashton's letter to the residents mentions the future cost of maintaining the reserve will be funded by the Council. He is not quite sure how

the additional expenditure aligns with potential cuts in Local Authority spending. Will funding of the reserve be kept at the current funding levels? He does not know what the current level is at the moment but will it be kept at the same level? What percentage of the total levy collected each year was available for maintenance of the Reserve, e.g. less any administration costs etc.? Are other council tax payers in agreement with the funding changes given that the public expenditure remains under financial pressure. What percentage of Village Quarter residents were in disagreement with paying the annual levy and how many were actively pressing for its abolition. So where did the demand come from to stop paying the levy? Why was it necessary to revoke the agreement entered into with Village Quarter residents when these home owners agreed to the payment of the levy as a condition of the purchase of their properties? What was the process in respect to the involvement of Town and District Councillors that ensure the decision to abolish the charge was reasonable, legal, democratic, fair and presented no risk to the biodiversity of the Reserve. The Reserve is an important site for many protected species, given its importance, has Natural England been informed as a courtesy that there have been changes in the funding arrangements. Do residents realise that their automatic membership of the Avon Wildlife Trust will cease and were they consulted on the package. He looks forward to receiving Cllr. Ashton's response and the response from anyone else who would like to comment on that.

- Mr. Tom Thompson he said that he lives in the Mirage and he is one of the many people who live on the Marina and pay the charge for financing the national Nature Reserve. Anyone can visit the reserve free of charge. Whilst a finite number of the citizens of Portishead have to pay for its upkeep. He pays £74 towards the Reserve. The idea that we all entered into it with agreement is not quite true because unless we did enter into the agreement we could not purchase the properties. It can scarcely be called an agreement. Since it is a national Nature Reserve anybody in the United Kingdom can visit, why should a small percentage of the citizens of Portishead be financing it.
- Mr. John Clark is a little puzzled he will try and avoid anything that looks like he is making a party political comment. When he purchased his property on Merchants Square, this was part of the deal and there was no option about this, it was a legally binding arrangement. He is afraid Cllr. Ashton can't change that legally binding arrangement without going through due legal process; it will mean some sort of codicil on the deed. He thought there are 3,000 properties approximately, half an hours work for a solicitor, £200 an hour. Where is this £300k legal fee for this? Where is the money coming from? You and I know where it is coming from, it will come from the people who are already paying £74 per year. With all due respect this idea is not reasonable. We all entered into this voluntarily and we will have to live with it. The other point that he wanted to make about this, suppose that one of the 3,000 odd people refuses to go along with this and insists that they keep to the original arrangement and pays through the agency, which Cllr. Nigel Ashton just happens to be Chairman of. Does that invalidate the whole process? He is puzzled, and he looks forward to some legal advice.

He went on to raise one other matter. He saw something in the Daily Telegraph, which he thoroughly approved of. Given the difficult conditions that have arisen between England and Scotland as most of you don't have the benefit of a Scottish wife, it was suggested that one way of improving relations is to introduce twinning between schools in England and Scotland. He thought that this was a brilliant idea. We could take a town about the same size as Portishead on the coast, like Arbroath. We can go up to them and buy Smokies and they can come and visit our Nature Reserve. He hopes that, the idea gets into the minds of at least a few of the educational people in this area.

- Ms. Jenny Rasmussen spoke about the Golf Course saying that this land was given to the people of Portishead by Bristol Corporation and since then has been sold or passed over to North Somerset Council. So she thinks that we have got every right to walk along the golf course and as for a bund being put down she thinks that this will be unsafe for the people walking if they can't be seen. Anybody could jump out at them if you were walking alone. Perhaps we could speak to Nigel Ashton about this.
- Mr. Brian Boyland spoke about the Nature Reserve. Most points that he had wanted to raise have already been raised, but he should mention that he has written recently to Liam Fox asking him to ascertain from North Somerset Council whether the ongoing funding arrangements will be adequate to maintain the reserve in the excellent state that it is at the moment.
- Ms. Beverley Langdale said that she attended one of these meetings two years ago just to see what went on at them just for curiosity and she asked for something then. The safety of the people using the coast path. There is a handrail or rather we did have a handrail leading down the steps on to the coast path, which after a number of years disappeared. She requested at the meeting that the rail be put back, because it ended up thrown back on the beach and left. The steps that this was attached to are used regularly by a lot of walkers and she still feels that they need to put the handrail back, for the safety of the people that use our wonderful coastal path. She was wondering if perhaps she puts one there herself if somebody would have any objections when they come to have an accident if they slip or if the Council will put back what rightly should be a safety handrail for the use of everybody.
- Ms. Sylvia Hollyman said that most of the concerns that she has about both the golf course and the Nature Reserve have been addressed by people. The only other thing that she thinks hasn't been mentioned yet is the change of funding. Will the maintenance of the reserve still be carried out by Avon Wildlife Trust or have North Somerset Council got other plans for that?
- Mr. Geoff Hardman said that he has written various notes. He said as some of you are aware last week he stood at the District Elections for North Somerset First Independents. Needless to say he was unsuccessful in getting into the Council but was successful in what had been achieved in the seven months from when he decided to stand. He fought what is best described as a clean and honest campaign and went into the counting office with his head held high and left with his head held high. His only regret is letting down the people that

voted for him and for that he apologises. The whole experience was an eye opener. For those who haven't done this before he said; you are so busy that sometimes even his wife asked who he was. You are out canvassing, delivering leaflets, attending meetings and answering emails. Then on polling day, you stand at the polling station for up to fifteen hours in his case. Then you spend nearly all day in the counting office waiting for the result. By this time your feet scream at you. All day your back does everything it can to hurt you in revenge for standing all day. The whole effort was worth it, and you quickly discover which councillors have integrity and manners and the one or two that you would not give the time of day. He was asked why he stood and the answer was simple, as having previously voted for the party that got in, we live in a democracy but not in North Somerset. How could there be 61 councillors, with the Conservatives holding the majority of the seats but the decisions are made by a dictatorship, an Executive of 8 people. They make all the decisions and then tell the rest of the party what they have to vote for at District meetings. Secondly, and he said he will have to name these people, how can Councillor Baker who is a District Councillor and Councillor Nigel Ashton who is the Chief Executive earns £38k a year and normal District Councillors circa £8,300, you have to ask the question how the two of them earn somewhere between £75-90k per year. Something not right there. He was looking forward to working with the Town Council to see what other decisions could be done at Town Council level, rather than District. For the new District Councillors good luck and if the management have to be voted in, now is the time to grow a spine and vote out the dictatorship and go back to being a democracy. He went on to say that he would like to take the opportunity to congratulate all those who have won a seat as Town Councillors. He looks forward to working in partnership with them to make Portishead a better place to live. For those who are standing as District and Town Councillor, although he is against it as there is a conflict of interest, please be aware that you were elected by the people of Portishead and that is where your allegiance lies. However a quiet word of warning both the public and he will continue to ask probing questions and statements that we feel is needed, answer honestly and we don't have a problem. Tell a lie or be dishonest and we will ensure that you are held accountable. At the end of the day we all want what is best for Portishead. His only concern is that Reyna Knight is no-longer a Town Councillor and that she will now be sitting directly behind him at Town meetings and hasn't said what her intentions are. So should he wear a stab vest or a hardhat, time will tell. At the last meeting he suggested that the District Councillors should have Town Hall meetings in Portishead as they should also be answerable to the Town as are the Town Councillors to answer questions and issues. Can the new District Councillors arrange this instead of hiding in the ivory towers in Weston? He also discussed the skate park. Another year goes by and no movement, there appears to be a severe case of apathy, as both Town and District Councillors don't want it. Kilkenny Field is the most obvious site for it as it is on a slope overlooking the sea and is not too near houses. Speeding, PACT meetings have discussed this every six weeks, North Somerset Council has statistics going back in excess of ten years about the speeding on Avon Way and Bristol Road. They are now going to access the last 4 years stats again. So there is no movement there. New issues that we need to be looking at this

years are things called “Wakeboarding” in the Marina. All the other wakeboarding facilities across the UK are held in lakes, here these people want to put one in the Marina, where it is a funnel, there are no facilities there for changing rooms or toilets, but they have already approached North Somerset Council for planning. Janet and Ann, the Golf Course he is with them 100% on this, we need the Golf Course to stay as it is, he has played it and it is lovely, it’s challenging, it’s a nightmare. However he fears for the course, because at present there is a £500k lawsuit against North Somerset Council by Mr Stiff, because of the lack of planning, however if it goes ahead Mr. Stiff stands to earn £160k from all the landfill. If they need to have his participation to help or we need him to chain himself to them, please feel free to let him know. The other thing that we need to be aware of is that there are plans for more retirement flats. Not all the retirement flats in Portishead are full yet there is a planning application going through for 135 apartments near to the health centre with 68 car parking spaces. The lady that attended the meeting here, who disagreed with the fact that he said that they were here for greed purposes only, says that there is enough car parking spaces for 135 apartments and possibly 200 residents won’t have any effect on the Health Centre. These are issues that we need to be aware of and he looks forward to carrying on hindering the Town Council as he has done for the last 12 months.

- Mrs. Marilyn Koops explained that she chaired the meeting in which they raised an objection last November to the Golf Course going ahead. They were not supplied with the amount of information that North Somerset Council eventually received. She has relooked at the application recently and re-read all the design and access statements. The last sentence did mention 16,000 tons of landfill that was the only information that they had, apart from a contour map, which was frankly unreadable. There was no mention of a bund. Had all these issues been raised in the application then we would have been enabled to ask questions, we were not. I know it has been queried that we should have investigated the financial background of Mr. Stiff, but that is totally beyond our remit. We cannot do that, it is not something that we would do for any application, so please bear with us; we are trying our very best for you as residents. We have several issues going on at the moment, with Aldi, the wakeboarding and as just mentioned more elderly persons’ flats. All those issues we are hopefully going to address, whether she remains as chair, is another matter, it is an onerous job, believe me.
- Mr. D. Horlick added his weight to the issue of Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve; it is a real concern of his, as it is for many people here. Enough people have spoken on it that he doesn’t need to add a lot more detail. We were very much under the understanding that the freehold of the Nature Reserve would pass to Avon Wildlife Trust and the fact that North Somerset Council seems to have decided to take this on contrary to what he understood to be the case. The whole future of the Nature Reserve worries him, because he doesn’t quite understand what the reason was for North Somerset taking on.
- Mr. Bevis Watts, Chief Executive of Avon Wildlife Trust spoke on behalf of Avon Wildlife Trust. He thanked those who have made comments on concerns

around Portbury Wharf Nature Reserve. There isn't enough time in everyone's evening to go into the details and some of the points that need clarifying around it. He would just like to briefly encourage all the District and Town Councillors present to take an interest in a letter that they will shortly be sending to North Somerset Council, which will ask for two things, firstly an enquiry into how this has been handled and raising serious questions about the Code of Conduct of elected members during an election, where there were clearly conflicts of interest. He confirmed that Chris is a Director of Port Marina Management Company and not all of the directors, in fact only two of the five were involved in agreeing the original letter and sending it. He is not even sure that there is any validity to the current situation. Secondly, under the Freedom of Information Act, all of the papers on what options were considered by North Somerset Council, for alternative means of structuring the funding of the Nature Reserve going forward. He doesn't believe that any other options have been seriously considered, they certainly haven't been discussed with the Trust. There are ways of addressing some of the concerns raised with this scheme as after all it was the first scheme of this type in the country and is much lauded and celebrated by national Government (recently a case study in Tony Duorer's new book). He thinks that there is some considerable embarrassment for Town and District Councillors in this situation.

- Ms. Pat Gardener told people about something that has organically grown from the Everything Portishead Facebook group. If you go down on to Sugar Loaf beach, you will see for the first time in about 50 years that the tidal pool is now brimming with water. They have discovered that it is watertight. Following a rather strange conversation between some people of her generation who went to Gordano School in the 1970's. They started talking about Sugar Loaf beach and what an absolutely beautiful place it is. Someone mentioned the tidal pool and wouldn't it be good if it could be cleaned out. Thirty people joined in, they made a few calls to North Somerset Council and lo and behold they found out that there is no specific permission required for them to try and make it nice again. So two weeks ago they had some excavators dig out the pool. They discovered the bung hole and made and fitted a new bung. The tide came in and filled the pool and it is watertight. What they are now wanting to do is to get some ideas from the members of our lovely community here in Portishead, who have a history of saving things. This is another blessing that we have here in Portishead and we really need this to be a goer. (Mrs Gardener gave out the details of an "Open Interest Meeting" due to take place later that week). What they want to know is what could happen down on the beach, if the undergrowth is cleared away they could make a little shelter there, they are thinking about stations for barbeques, Through the Everything Portishead website and their Facebook Page, Sugar Loaf Tidal Pool, Portishead, they are front page news in the Mercury. It is something which is an exciting project which so far hasn't cost anyone a brass farthing. This is what they aim to keep it at, they reckon that they can do it as a people's project, they want support and they want people to come down and see what they are doing, Let your dog jump in. What they are looking at now is bringing back to life something that is for the future generations and our grandchildren.

- Mr. Matti Hemmings talked about Portishead Skate Park project, which has been going on for about 10 years. It will be a facility for young people to use, which is a free space for young people to go and use. It is not just a playground there is loads of different equipment for everyone, not just a certain group of people, all generations from the youngster, 27 or 40, there are no limits, it's just a location that needs to be sorted out, it is just embarrassing for Portishead. There are a lot of people against the Lake Grounds, but it is an ideal location, it is safe it is open for people to be able to see it, it has a picnic area, there is space, which everyone will be able to use. You can watch the youngsters, grandchildren. It is probably going to be the best location in Portishead. There is nothing else which pushed forward; the railway station didn't go to plan. Some of the Councillors were talking about contacting the land owner to see if they could use the location to build a skate park. The answer is no due to development; also property is worth much more than a skate park. If we all come together as a community in Portishead, find a suitable location and build a skate park and lets not have it go on for another 10 years. The youngsters will be able to let off steam and the local police will get involved and meet people. There can be community days. It is important for new people coming into the area. He works with Sustrans getting young people active, getting them out of the house and getting them active. A location needs to be sorted out. He has tried to bring positives to the project.
- Prof. James Mitchell said he was going to be very brief. He said that Janet Davey and others have spoken so competently about the extraordinary affairs around the Golf Course. He would just like to say that he noted that there has been one apology for absence at this meeting, so he hopes he is right in thinking that all our other councillors in this room will have heard everything that has been said today and will do the right thing.
- Mr. John Dixon said that he would like to say four things. Firstly, two things that were mentioned in the minutes of the last Annual Meeting, there was the speed of traffic down Avon Way and not reducing speed at the crossroads, which was mentioned last year and nothing has been done about it. Secondly the skate park was mentioned last year and nothing has been done. He said it has been dragging on for several years. We want something done yesterday. If the Duke of Edinburgh was here he would say get your finger out. The other points are that there has been money made available for road improvements and the Cabstand lights have been mentioned. We have been down this road before and we don't want that. The money must be spent wisely and not spent on improvements which are going to make things worse. Lastly, the Golf Course. A lot has been said about the Golf Course but there have been some earthworks going on which are going to be 4m high, which is quite high. The question must be asked higher up, is the Golf Course going to be developed as a golf course or is it just an excuse to be used for landfill dumping.
- Cllr. David Jolley spoke about the ward boundaries changing. He used to represent just Down Road and West Hill; he now encompasses the golf Course. He said that it is bound to be an issue and he has been involved and approached about it. He felt that the meeting might just like one or two facts. As of today there is a lot of information available on the Planning Portal, all

you have to do is go to Planning Portal 2496. Today he asked for an update from the Planning Officer on planning permission and Landlord's consent. The planning permission document has not been released, planning permission has not been issued, the applicant has repeatedly been asked for tree and ecological reports and originally the ecological report wasn't forthcoming and was only submitted when the officer said he was going to refuse the application. So that is why the application changed the day before the hearing from refusal to approval. He added that he is not a member of the NSC Planning Committee and was not involved with the decision. In regard to criticism that he has had, there have been some about the ecological report on this 30 acre site, these should be considered in the context of a golf course and by its very nature the grass should be kept short. It is the uncut areas along the western and northern perimeters where the grass is longer and is more valuable habitat, and it was on this basis that the ecological report was accepted as being proportionate. With regard to the trees the council recognises the mature and decent specimens and has asked for an additional report. The additional reports that have been asked for have come forward yet. A deadline for replies from the applicant has been set for three weeks' time and if no reply is forthcoming the whole thing will be rescinded. With regard to Landlords approval most people will be aware that the applicant has issued a request for compensation. The Council has robustly rejected it on the grounds that before consent could be issued the Council needs to be satisfied that various conditions that were within the planning permission including that of the geological survey and how the Council are to be indemnified against any unforeseen costs or claims. To date this information hasn't been provided, so of course North Somerset Council has not been able to make a decision. It is down to the applicant to provide the information before Landlord's consent can be granted. Finally he referred to the interpretation of landfill. He has been told by a signature on one of these petitions that landfill would include household rubbish in black sacks attracting seagulls. This is not the case, and why would anybody think that local councillors would endorse such an action. The submitted design and access statement clearly states that the landfill would consist of locally sourced inert matter, consisting of clay, stone or mixed gravel, so clean, appropriate, inert materials. As the majority of the golf course levels are stated as plus or minus 2 metres it would not take long for building rubble to work its way up to the surface. Complaints have been received about cutting back brambles and such around the perimeter during bird nesting season, which started on the 1<sup>st</sup> March. He has been advised it is not illegal to do this type of maintenance at any time of the year, what is illegal is to disturb the brambles when there is nesting birds within them. As such it is a criminal offence and therefore a police matter. The Council takes the view that this is everyday maintenance for the golf course. So in summary neither planning permission or Landlord's consent has been granted and won't be until the Council is fully satisfied that all its conditions and safeguards have been met. Cllr. Jolley offered to answer questions.

- Mr. Derek Rigby asked if the District Council can let this land go for landfill, to form a golf course, someone could make a lot of money and it should be the Council. If you are going to go ahead with it, why not the Council and reduce our rates.

- Cllr. Jolley replied that we all know the Council is not brilliant at running things, take a look at Portishead Pool, it is really popular now and run by volunteers. He is sure with the savings that NSC has to make would we as Councillors want to spend a load of your money producing a golf course that quite honestly he thinks won't make it.
- Dr. Michael Brighton spoke about the bird nesting. If you look at the ecological report which was duly paid for by Mr Stiff, if you look at the last paragraph, his consultant strongly recommends that no ground clearance is done during the nesting period. Mr. Stiff is ignoring the information presented to him in his own ecological report. It maybe that Mr. Stiff is using an expert input and checked that area for nesting birds and not found any nests, he accepts that. The other point is if you look on the RSPB's website about nesting birds, if there is reasonable possibility that there are nesting birds in an area and if you disturb them that can be an offence. Given the number birds flying around the central hedge, given that habitat and the number birds that he has seen (at least 10 species of birds), he will eat his hat if there are no nests.
- Mr. Ken Smith asked why North Somerset Council doesn't just take the lease away from Mr. Stiff. It will save all the hassle and all the trouble.
- Cllr. Jolley said that Mr. Stiff has a legal document. He explained that he was just trying to give everyone a balanced view of what the situation is today. Planning permission has not been granted, he wants to make that clear and Landlord's Permission has not been granted and won't be until all the conditions have been met. At the end of the day if there is a successful golf course and it's a new attraction, what's wrong with that?
- Mr. Jeremy Ludlow said that we have just heard that North Somerset Council would not be competent managers of a Nature Reserve.
- Cllr. Jolley responded to that saying, he believes that in the letter that he saw advising of the moves, that North Somerset Council use their Parks and Open Spaces people to look after the reserve. Clearly the point was made that wildlife and parks and open spaces are not the people and have a different expertise.
- Ms. Catherine Stockham said if anyone wonders why they wanted to sell off the golf course they should see the files on the shenanigans over the swimming pool. North Somerset Council didn't want to run the swimming pool; they wanted to close it and bulldoze it and sell the land for £500k. The report which they spent 2 ½ years compiling was absolutely full of blatant lies and misinformation to say that they could close the pool. There is something very wrong going on here. They are selling off Portishead's assets.
- Cllr. Jolley stated that North Somerset Council is not selling off the golf course. The swimming pool, the reason it is there is because Cllr. Pasley and himself sat on a scrutiny panel that fought to have the swimming pool passed over to the community.

*Cllr. Jolley was interrupted by several members of the public.*

Cllr. Jolley said he is just trying to pass on information that he is aware of, as a responsible Ward Councillor, he doesn't make the decisions, and he is one of 50 people, and his voice has to compete with 50 other interests.

*A woman spoke without giving her name and was inaudible.*

- Cllr. Jolley responded by saying that was a concern from him and Janet Davey raised that with him for the dog walker's pathway. The bund as he understands it is not a 4m wall, it is a graded slope. He asked if someone could tell him what the actual levels between the path and Nore Road are. That would put into perspective. If you have looked at the plans, then maybe you do know.
- Mr. Peter Burden spoke about two issues that have been raised tonight and he has found out quite a bit of detail about one of them and the other one he is more than certain about. His view is that the planning application on Nore Road for the golf course is irrelevant, he also thinks that the Landlord's consent is irrelevant and he thinks the 51 councillors of North Somerset Council is irrelevant, because he believes most people that have lived in Portishead for 50 years have used that land believing they have done it as of right, as a public open space for in excess of twenty years. He was taken there at the age of 7 by his mother and the Cub mistress, he used it, he has watched the Red Arrows from there and has flown a kite from there, and nobody has challenged that. He has picked up on some of the correspondence between District Councillors and some of the lawyers at North Somerset and he has put that to some of the lawyers at North Somerset as to "where is the evidence", that the lawyer who drew up the lease had the right to offer what he alleged to do, namely allow sole use to the golf course. He hasn't had a response to that yet and he personally doesn't believe a response can be given. He has known that the legal department of North Somerset be blatantly wrong in the past. The second issue is a straight forward question that he needs to find out the details to, the nature reserve in Portbury was laid out when he was Executive Member for Transport at North Somerset Council. He has fought for 25 years to keep that corridor open. He has tried to get involved in that agreement as an Executive Member, he was told that he was not legally allowed to, it is a planning condition, which means the committee have to agree it. If an Executive decision has been made, something has changed in the law and until he knows what that change is, he won't know his stance on that matter. But his stance on the Golf Course is quite clear, the Council will lose and it will become an open space.
- Ms. Pat Gardner asked Cllr. Jolley if he is in favour and does he have any kind of interest in what happens to the Golf Course open space as he is not a resident, is this just for political purposes.
- Mrs. Judith Brighton said just for information people might be interested that she has written to Liam Fox just before the election. She has had a response

from his PA on the 24<sup>th</sup> April. "Dr. Fox has been assured by the Leader of the Council Nigel Ashton, that there are no proposals for landfill and the only changes which have been requested by the Leaseholder are to alter the contours of one part of the course, to improve its attraction to golfers." It wouldn't surprise you to know that her response to Dr Fox was "Dear lone, this is totally wrong". She stated the facts and she got a response stating that her response will be passed to Dr Fox, who is in Scotland, he has obviously been misinformed.

- Mr. John Dixon said that if what Cllr. Jolley is saying is correct then the whole thing is a waste of time and the present leaseholder can pack his bags and go, but if he or somebody else is going to have it as a golf course, you are saying that there is good reason why the council shouldn't run it. The Council should pass financial responsibility to somebody else, but the Council should still retain powers over it.

*Clerk's note: It is unclear what Mr Dixon said at this point.*

- Mrs. Janet Davey said that she told Cllr. Jolley about this on the 20<sup>th</sup> March, so in fact he has known about it for about 5/6 weeks; he is not new to it. The second thing is, it is very well known the problems with policing of infill, Turngold is undergoing problems, because people have been suspended and there is a law case against them because they have been chucking anything they like in there. It actually does say in a major report that she has seen that you have to have 24hr policing to make sure that people don't illegally dump. The third thing is the wonderful ecological report that was done, was adequate states that "this crematorium will think about how the lights will come on and off when people enter at night" she queried their cut and paste. The fourth thing is a problem with Town Green status, she has looked it up, if "we" apply for Town Green Status at this stage, we can't get it, because we are applying for it when there has been an incident. The only people that can apply for Town Green status is the landlord, that's North Somerset Council and they can apply for it at any time. She has been in touch with the Open Spaces Society, and they have said that they will have no chance of getting Town Green status, if there has been an incident. Elaine Bowman has advised that they continue. Mrs Davey has got lots of right to roam paper here and asked people to get a user evidence form from her at the end of the meeting.
- Mrs. Ann Townsend said that she really thinks that Cllr. Jolley is great standing up and she wished that more Councillors would do so and they would then have more respect for them. From a personal point of view she said that he has been fairly helpful, you have given her heads up on a number of things that she has found extremely useful. She went in to the meeting of the 11<sup>th</sup> February, knowing that it was going to be approved, there was obviously a pre-meeting, and she had assumed that there would be democracy. Cllr. Jolley had mostly replied to her correspondence, during the election period there appeared to be a bit of a lull and she really wanted him to respond, there didn't appear to be much going on. She then went on to say about his running mate Felicity Baker has not even responded yet, she hasn't bother to respond to her at all and that person was one of the people who raised their hand at 11<sup>th</sup> February meeting to approve this application. The other thing she was

unsure about is how “hot off of the press” Cllrs Jolley’s information is. She spoke to Neil Underhay, she said that she likes to speak to the Planning Officers, they are not political and like to do their jobs and that’s it. A couple of days ago she got an email from him, saying planning permission was given subject to conditions. A lot of people in this room are under the impression that planning permission hasn’t been given, her understanding is that planning permission was approved with conditions but she doesn’t think the certificate has been issued yet. Secondly Landlord’s consent, subject to the geological survey, we all know what Mr. Stiff has been doing all over social media, he has been upsetting people, he has been aggressive to them, he has even called Nigel Ashton a liar, she is not sure how many people would agree with that, but that is what he did. It is not a good look for someone that is a tenant for our “jewel in the crown”. Secondly, could she have Cllr. Jolley’s assurance that he will respond to her questions as he is now her District Councillor, he is very lucky to get her as one of his constituents. Cllr. Pasley found it very difficult when he was her ward councillor. He couldn’t answer any questions at all. Mrs Townsend said whilst we are here, Martin Slocombe of Hillside Road is awaiting a response from Cllr. Pasley on the subject of whether he can walk across the golf course. Mr Slocombe asked Mrs Townsend to pass the message on to Cllr. Pasley on his behalf. She went on to say to Cllr. Jolley that she would like his assurance as her District Councillor that when she asks him what she considers to be pertinent questions, that if he thinks she is asking stupid questions to let her know. She hopes to always ask questions that are for the interest of Portishead. She is also interested in the Nature Reserve and all the other things that are going on in Portishead. That is another campaign for another day. Her original question is “how hot off of the press” is that? As Neil Underhey said a couple of days ago that Planning Permission was given subject to conditions but no certificate has been issued.

- Cllr. Jolley explained that he got the information this morning. Cllr. Jolley said that Mrs Townsend is asking for his cooperation and he is quite happy to do what he has done and help her as much as he can, as any of his constituents. His constituency is West Ward, there are just short of 7,000 people in there, there are 365 days in a year, he does take some time off for himself, he will do the best that he can. He said while we are talking about selling off the land it has been a golf course since 1907, as landlord North Somerset Council granted the concession two years ago. Part of the remit of the concession was that the Council wanted it improving. From there, like letting the concession with the boats on the Lake Ground, it has ballooned into something that nobody could have foreseen. He can understand everyone being really upset; he would be upset if he thought it was going to be a landfill site. His own concern apart from the geological side was that this guy was going to make a load of landfill, make a fortune out of it and then maybe end up in the Bahamas or something, leaving us with a mess to clear up. The following day, the conditions that were going to be sent out were stopped, so in point of fact that even though lowly District Councillors that don’t even live in Portishead, that is a well-known fact, that things can be done. Cllr. Jolley commented on Town Green Status and confirmed that Mrs Davey is right about retrospective applications, but what you most likely don’t know is that the District Council has what it calls a Core Strategy, that is its plan up until 2025, it includes

railway building and houses, the Lake Grounds, Kilkenny Fields and the Golf Course in that Core Strategy are all retained as open space, so they are not there to be built on. The reason why we have that in there is so some developer who's decided that he has built enough on the Marina and wants to move on to that field, well he can't because the Government Inspector who overturns a lot of the decisions that we don't like, but because it is in our Core Strategy it is deemed as protected.

- Mrs. Judith Brighton thanked Cllr. Jolley for standing up and being brave. She raised a couple of issues; he said that landlord's permission was pulled at the last minute. The worrying thing was actually if there had not been opposition she actually does believe that despite everything that has been talked about it would have just gone ahead and she finds this really worrying, because she does not see the evidence for that tiny portion of land ever being a thriving golf course, and she can see that and would be worrying about it. She is not in any position of responsibility, she has never attended a Town Council meeting until the last one, she has never written a letter to an MP or to a Councillor, but she does think that the Councillors need to be a little bit more thorough, before they just put a tick in the box and "that will do us". I'm not a golfer and correct me if I'm wrong but where is the profit going to come for Mr. Stiff, when this landfill is finished? There was one person on the golf course, when her husband went by last week, we commented because it was a golfer and believe it or not there were three today, but we go past and there is nobody, there is no profit in it and therefore we have got to be suspicious and we need our Councillors to be suspicious.
- Mrs. Janet Davey apologised for shouting at Cllr. Jolley saying that she had been really cross. When the golf course is in enclosed it is not going to be open land and Mr. Still intends to entirely fence it and only allow golfers on it. It is not going to be open land.
- Mr. Dan Richardson spoke about the skate park. He said that he was part of the original campaign for the skate park and he said that he would just like to pick up where Matti Hemmings left off. He has been a BMX rider for 5 years, it has done so much for his life, it has given him confidence, it has given him friends and has taken him across the UK and to other countries and he wants to really see other people flourish, like he did. A skate park is a great way to do that, it is packed here and to him it is such a great community around it, so he has come here today to bring it up as a discussion topic and seek other people's opinions on it. Personally he can't think of a bad thing, he referred to skate parks in Nailsea, Clevedon and Yatton, they have them and they benefit massively from them. There have been competitions and he has met so many people there, so he can't see a problem with it, he might be bias, but he would like to get other people's opinions on what might be possible.
- Mr. Ken Smith said that he would like to thank a lot of people who pay towards the Nature Reserve. He has heard the wonderful sounds of a cuckoo. He might never ever hear that sound again and he thought thank you very much to all those people who pay towards the upkeep of the reserve. To hear a cuckoo is very unusual.

- Mrs. Annette Hennessy said it worries her slightly that at the Annual People's meeting that Councillors say that they were the people that made a difference on facilities that we are going to lose, because most of the things that she feels have been in the papers and have been important in this town are actually saved by the people of Portishead and quite often the Councillors don't get involved until the public raise the concern. So for Cllr. Jolley to actually say that it was him and Cllr. Pasley who called in the Swimming Pool decision at a scrutiny meeting is really worrying because he gave the impression that he was the person who saved the swimming pool. The people of Portishead saved our swimming pool and she thinks it's really important that we remember that. Credit to the people of Portishead not Councillors. It was in minutes long before the pool was saved that the pool was going to be demolished and nobody believed the people until the people spoke and the people acted and thanks to the Trust who took on the pool we do have a pool still, and although their hands maybe changing, that is down to the people highlighting it. A little bit like the golf course it was down to two residents who highlighted the concern. Now what is going to happen about the golf course she does not know, but as a resident she is concerned about some issues. She would like it to remain a golf course, but she wants people to be able to walk across it, because that is what has always happened. The lease worries her, because the lease was in the name of Portishead Golf for All and it was a man called Roddy Watkins that signed that lease together with another man. Then that lease was transferred because he sold his shares to Adrian Stiff, in a company called Luckland Ltd, but strangely enough the District Council doesn't want to know that the concessionaire's name has changed or his contact details have changed, they're quite happy that it is still under the Golf for All title, but she would question that if they have to go to that concessionaire for utility payments or check that they are monitoring or maintaining the site properly how can North Somerset Council do that without knowing who the concessionaire actually is? The title Portishead Golf for All doesn't tell them that so she is at a loss as to why this has gone on. Why haven't the District Councillors asked these questions, why did it get planning permission, and it did. When it did get planning permission Ann Townsend started to highlight this in the papers and on social media and got a huge amount of people to support her, then questions started to be investigated a little bit more. What worries her about the lease is that she cannot see any penalties in the lease. From what she can see of it Mr. Stiff (who has been polite and answered her questions) he is due to get £120,000 from inert landfill and if there are no penalties in the lease he could up sticks and go. She does think that the course does need maintaining and North Somerset Council has done the same trick as it has done with lots of things and they let it go to rack and ruin and then say that they are not financially viable. This worries her as the golf course has not been advertised properly, one poster on the fence and that had to be there as part of the lease agreement. Let's not have District Councillors telling us that they are on top of things, because they are not. She would like to know why they are not on top of things. And she would like to know why the District Councillors in this room supported the planning application, without having all the facts. We are in the same position on the golf course as we were on lots of other issues; the skate park, the pool. She

could name hundreds of issues that have never been resolved properly because we don't have the facts and it's been up to the people of Portishead to find them. Mrs Hennessy went on to speak about the Sea Wall and the Nature Reserve; she understands that until the levy for the sea wall was taken off it was about £70 per year. The reason why the sea wall portion had to be removed was because they have finally listened to the public and recognised that this particular sea wall does not protect the homes from flood. The bund that the houses sit on does that. But people would not listen to the people that were trying to protect that pathway, there were residents on the Village Quarter that were trying to make the residents of Portishead believe that the sea path protected their homes from flood, and was not the case. It has taken years to even get that truth out into the open. So they had no option but to remove the seawall portion from the levy. She has a huge archive of material for the sea path. In all of the documents that she has gained under the freedom of information act (because the information has not been forthcoming when she has requested it) there are people in this room that have supported the sea wall path and reinstate its opening they know the problems that we had alone. In the documents it was stated that North Somerset Council were going to take on the transfer of the land of which those homes lie as part of the master plan. What she does recall seeing is that Avon Wildlife Trust was going to transfer to North Somerset Council. She addressed the representatives from the Avon Wildlife Trust and asked them how many hundreds of thousands of pounds have they actually had in payment from the residents of Portishead in the last 10 years, since that has been in operation because whatever that amount is our district council are going to have to pay the same amount to maintain it and she can't see how that can be viable.

*Clerk's Note: A brief discussion took place between Cllr. Arthur Terry and Mrs Hennessy.*

Mrs. Hennessy said going back to the sea wall path, that matter is still unresolved, she hopes that it will not be effected by any sale or transfer of land, it has never fitted right with a lot of people in Portishead who haven't paid the levy knowing that other people are paying it and paying their council tax as well. You have support for people in Portishead from those that were paying it, that was the deal that was made by the land agents and there is not much the people in Portishead can do about it.

Mrs Hennessy went on to say that she supports Matti and Dan with the skate park. People in Portishead have been led a merry game on the skate park and she doesn't think we need to reiterate it here because it has been talked about for years and anyone who thinks that councillors don't toe the party line ask her for the archives on the skate park and she can show you that they most certainly do toe the party line. Beware and be open to questions, make sure you get the evidence and don't just listen to hear say, because quite often people in this hall make comments without giving any evidence and then that gets passed down and it is like Chinese whispers around the town and people are misinformed. If you want some information please ask for it, a lot of information is out there. On the skate park the young people of the Town have been done a dis-service, they need to move on and she hopes that whoever helps them move on will not be politically bias which is what we have seen in

the past. She went on to say about the minutes, it is very difficult when you are in this hall to suddenly read through the minutes when they are not necessarily in front of you, to make sure that they are correct. She went on to say that at Town Council meetings raised many times the editing of the minutes and the fact that they do not reflect what members of the public have said. Just beware that they are not always a true reflection of what people have said but she does appreciate that the Clerk has a very difficult job typing those up. With regard to the last Annual Town meeting minutes there is a paragraph in those Annual Town meeting minutes that causes her concern. It is not only incorrect but it misleads the public into believing that there are people in this town who don't have the town at heart, and she thinks that they all do. That comment is in paragraph nine of page 2. At the last Annual Town Meeting a resident stood up and made accusations against some sort of video on the internet. He claims that he was named and you can read the minutes for yourself. She asked to see sight of that video and she was passed it, the video didn't name anyone, it was a satirical video, just like what you see on Have I Got News for You. Nobody was named, nobody was accused of anything, nobody was tarnished in anyway by what was said, so please be aware when you are reading minutes that they are not always a pure reflection of the facts, and she was as dumbfounded as anybody hearing that resident talk, which is why she had asked for the evidence and no evidence was available and to this day it has not been available either. Although the person in question said he was going to take legal advice on it and pursue it, he never has been able to as there is no evidence. We need to be very clear what we read and what we take from that. She finally went on to say that she thinks that we are all here because Portishead is truly the best place to live, she believes that and will continue to believe that until the day she dies. She thinks that we all have the right to question people. There are many people here that have stood up at Town Council meetings and supported councillors, we have praised them, but at the same time we have a right to raise concerns when they are appropriate and that residents shouldn't be criticised for raising that concern. Just be careful what you hear, just make sure that you ask for the evidence, please. And if more of our Councillors did that we wouldn't be in the state that we are in today with the golf course. Thank you.

- Dr Bevis Watts of Avon Wildlife Trust said that there are a few points that are prudent in answer to your questions. He confirmed that she was right in pointing out that the nature reserve has been 10 years in the making. For the first 5 years of that everything that the Trust put into the development of the reserve and all the agreements about it were entirely pro bono of the Trust, so there were five years of development work with the Trust paying off of its own back and put into the project. There have been lots of things in the first five years that the Nature Reserve has been running that the Trust has continues to put into, outside any funds received, there were no vehicles financed through the levy, so all the vehicles used for any heavy works on site are all those of the trust and are independent of that funding. He felt that in terms of how much money has been received over the five years since the arrangements have been accepted he does not know, but he thinks it's in the region of £450k and he went on to say that we will appreciate that the infrastructure that has gone in that site in terms of fencing and bird hides,

digging lakes, filling paths, none of it comes cheap. We need people to create what has been created there, he thinks it's also worth pointing out that those costs have been reducing over time in terms of the people time Avon Wildlife Trust have been charging, the management time has been reducing and was forecast to reduce in future budget proposals. What he understands from the letter is that there are £350k worth of reserves in Port Marine Management Company will be taken by the Council and used to fund the Nature Reserve initially, he drew a comparison with the £450k over 5 years and pointed out the funds won't go terribly far without reducing costs. He also went on to suggest that Council might not be able to manage the reserve at the same cost as the trust does, certainly not to maintain it at the same standard, in line with the management plan for the ecology there and that is because they benefit from an enormous amount of support from the wonderful volunteers. He thinks that the voluntary sector is well positioned to garner and train and have that support. So he hopes that that answers her question.

- Mr. Arthur Terry explained that he is a Town Councillor and a director of Port Marine Management Ltd along with Chris Gale who represents Avon Wildlife Trust. The numbers that you have just been given are about right. The annual cost has come down to around £100k per year and if the reserve is to be managed to the same level as it is now by the wildlife trust that is the sort of costs that North Somerset Council would have to put into this. Neither Chris Gale nor him was aware of this proposal, this letter that has been released, and they are not too happy about it. They will be having a board meeting fairly shortly and they will be asking a few questions. As he understands it, the situation is that Persimmons Homes who are the lead developer for the consortium have asked North Somerset Council to vary the planning obligation to remove the condition which requires them to create the Nature Reserve and make future provision for its management and maintenance. This will also entail North Somerset Council taking the freehold of the land, there is an agreement in place but not signed with the Wildlife Trust with the intention that the Wildlife Trust would take the freehold interest in that land and this would secure that land from any risk of future development, because as a wildlife organisation they have a duty to maintain the land for wildlife and there could well be a temptation by North Somerset Council to (if they are a little bit short of housing land) to build on it. It is clearly an interest that a Wildlife Trust organisation takes over the freehold of that land and secures it. That is where we are at the moment. His understanding is that the Executive decision was taken to approve the variation of the planning consent and the Legal Officers of the Council are working on that at this present time. He was not prepared to say anymore other than that is where his understanding is at the moment. He went on to say that he wants to make it very clear that while he knows that there are issues around the levy and they have been looking at alternative possibilities of how that could be funded, he does not think that any of us envisaged that we would go ahead with something like this without having the full facts before us and being able to put a proposal to the residents that would enable us to answer all their questions. He said that quite frankly he can't answer any of their questions, in terms of what happens to the money which is in reserves, it is held in trust for the residents, it is not PMML's money, we could not pass these funds to a third party without their consent, how you

obtain that consent he does not know. Who will pay for the covenants to be released for 2,650 properties, because that is the extent of the properties who will have a covenant on their deeds requiring them to pay a levy? These are all issues that really need some consideration before someone made the decision to write a letter. He went on to comment on the sea wall levy, it is not a PMML matter; they did collect the money for the sea wall commissioners. The sea wall is still being surveyed, but it is being maintained by the corporate bodies who have an interest in it, so while the residents are not being charged a levy, there are three or 4 corporate bodies who have that interest and are putting the money forward for the moment to pay the surveyors and maintain the wall. There is still an issue for those residents, because again it remains on a proportion of the Village Quarter resident's deeds, and this is another issue that needs to be resolved and removed from their deeds. This is still being considered by the corporate bodies.

- Mrs. Annette Hennessy asked Arthur Terry for clarification that as a director he didn't know that one of PMML's directors was sending letters out to residents telling them that the levy was going to be removed, just before the election?
- Mr. Arthur Terry responded that there are two directors of Port Marine Management that are here at this meeting and neither one knew that the letter was going to be sent out.
- Dr Bevis Watt also responded saying just to clarify, all the directors but perhaps not Arthur Terry were given 24 hours' notice to respond to a draft letter, but certainly it has been suggested publically that (as quoted in the Bristol Evening Post) Avon Wildlife Trust was aware of this letter. Chris was given 24 hours' notice, during which Dr Watts wrote to Cllr. Nigel Ashton demanding that the letter was not send and proposing some very vigorous changes to it, given that there was no analysis behind it. He thinks that some of the directors were aware the letter was about to go, certainly there was no process from the board meeting minuting the approval for what that letter said or that it would be sent on behalf of PMML directors.
- Arthur Terry noted that he was aware that Chris had seen an earlier draft of the letter, but felt that it was right to say that neither of them knew that the letter was about to be sent.
- Dr Bevis confirmed that he was only told that the letter had been sent two days after it had been sent and its final contents.
- Ms. Lisa Ewing asked if the Board of directors did not agree to the content of the letter has the board advised the recipients of that letter that it does not hold any weight, because obviously the people in this room are aware of what's been said today but they should be made aware that this is currently pending and when your next board meeting will take place. Has a date been agreed?

- Mr. Arthur Terry responded and said that nothing has been sent out to individuals.

*Clerk's Note: The remainder of Arthur Terry's response was inaudible.*

- Mrs. Annette Hennessy asked Arthur Terry a question about the levy, she thinks it's important that the people in the room know that some people did take legal advice on the levy and they refused to pay it, they couldn't see that it was legally binding. Now some people's deeds may be different. It is important for people on the Village Quarter to know that not everyone has to pay that levy even though they get billed it, because they refuse to do so.

*Clerk's Note: A discussion took place between Annette Hennessy and Arthur Terry.*

- Mrs. Judith Brighton why did PMML start discussions about the levy in the first place. People have signed a condition of their houses being built, she can't see why they should start grumbling now, and indeed if they are grumbling, what percentage are grumbling and why would anybody then take it upon themselves to start this ball rolling.
- Mr. Arthur Terry said that at the last Annual General Meeting of PMML there were a section of residents there and they have consistently raised the issue of the fairness of the levy and what he thinks was agreed was that they would look at the situation and see if there were alternative ways of funding and it was anticipated that they would probably get some information and discuss that and put a package of proposals together for the residents. What they weren't envisaging was someone would take a decision to transfer the funding to North Somerset Council. Incidentally he has asked a director who will be paying this, if he has got this in his budget and he hasn't answered. He does not know where the money is going to come from. The land will be managed as an amenity area and not as a Nature Reserve.
- Ms. Lisa Ewing said she was reading what Mr. Hardman said in the previous year's minutes and asked if she will have to wait a whole year before she sees the outcome or access the information.

*Clerk's Note: The Clerk confirmed that the draft minutes of the meeting will be made available as soon as they have been drafted.*

### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Agenda item .6)**

The Chairman asked if there was any other business

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.02pm.

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Signed

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Dated